

Abdominal Surgery Discharge Instructions
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The Plastic Surgery Center of Maryland



Diet

- May resume a regular diet.
- A diet low in fat and high in protein enables proper wound healing. In addition, consuming a diet rich in vitamins and minerals is also beneficial. Consider taking a multivitamin.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Dehydration and dizziness is common. This could be easily avoided by consuming fluids.

Activity

- No strenuous activity for 4 weeks (raking, shoveling, vacuuming, etc.).
- No heavy lifting or pushing >5 lbs for 6 weeks.
- Walking is encouraged. This is an important step in preventing blood clots in the legs which is a serious condition.
- You may return to the gym within one month's time to enjoy a cardio workout, but no lifting or pushing weights (upper or lower body) for an additional one month.

Showering

- May take down dressings and shower on Friday.
- Do not submerge wounds in water (such as soaking in the bathtub). Rather, take showers and allow soapy water to run over your incisions then pat dry.
- Pin your drains to a belt that may get wet in the shower (belt to bathrobe) to avoid tugging on drain sites.

Dressings/Wound Care

- Take dressings down 2-3 days after surgery and then change dressings daily.
- The dressing should include either Xeroform (yellow dressing/cloths) or Vaseline to the incisions then place clean ABD pads before putting on the abdominal binder. If you have Dermabond glue, you don't need to apply dressings or moisturizers right after surgery.
- Wear the abdominal binder at all times. You will wear this binder for at least 4 weeks. It should be firm but not tight or painful.
- You may wash your abdominal binder in cold water but make sure to line dry and do not use bleach.
- Drain Care:
 - Strip, Empty, and Record output twice daily. Keep a log of the outputs and bring with you to your follow-up appointment.

Medications

- *Antibiotic:* You will take an antibiotic (Bactrim or Levaquin) for 2 weeks.
- *Pain Medication:* You will have a narcotic (Tylox, Oxycodone, or Dilaudid) to help with pain relief. You can take 1-2 pills every 4-6 hours as you need for pain relief. In addition, you may have been given a prescription for Ibuprofen or Motrin. It is important to take this medication around the clock and with food. This will help with pain and swelling.
- *Pain Pump:* You may go home with a morphine pain pump. You should have enough pain medication in the pump to last 4 -5 days. You may remove the pain pump tubing when the pump is empty by removing the clear plastic dressing and gently pulling on the tubing - or you can wait until your follow-up appointment to have it removed.
- A stool softener (Colace) is recommended while taking narcotics as these can lead to constipation.
- If you take any medications that may affect your bleeding (Coumadin, Lovenox, Plavix, Aspirin, Naprosyn, Anti-Inflammatory medications, and etc.) please discuss the appropriate time to resume taking this medication with Dr. Shermak.

Follow-Up

- The first appointment will take place within a week of surgery. Please call 410-616-3000 with any questions.

What you Can Expect

- You can expect to walk "hunched over" immediately following surgery. This is due to skin and muscle tightness. This will improve each day as you heal.
- You can expect a feeling of abdominal tightness as though you are holding your breath in. This is due to the surgical tightening of your abdominal muscles. This will improve over time.
- Your body will help you in determining your limits—if it hurts, stop doing the activity.
- You can expect within 3-4 weeks' time to begin long-term scar therapy. You will be asked to massage your scars with Palmer's Coco Butter with Vitamin E or Mederma twice daily to obtain optimum results. We want you to have the best outcome possible!
- You can expect to see us in clinic each week for the first two weeks, a month out from your surgery and then 2 months later. You are always welcome to see us earlier if you have any questions or concerns.
- Your first drain will likely be removed on your first follow-up with the remaining drains removed at each subsequent visit given the output amount.
- Sutures around the belly button will be removed within 1-2 weeks of surgery.

What to Watch For and When to Call

- You can call our office at any time to speak with Ann or with Dr. Shermak if you have questions or concerns at 410.616.3000. In addition, you can also reach Dr. Shermak by email at **shermakmd@gmail.com**.
- Call if you develop a fever >101.5 degrees Fahrenheit, you note increased redness or purulent drainage at or around the incision.
- Call if you notice large increases of drain output, particularly if it is bright or dark red and has the consistency of blood or if the drain gets pulled out.
- Call if you notice asymmetry in swelling in a side or area of the abdomen or if you note skin changes (such as the color or texture of the skin).
- Call if you develop a skin rash all over your body as this may be an allergic reaction to one of your medications.
- Seek medical attention immediately if you begin to bleed moderately or heavily from your incisions, you develop chest pain, or develop shortness of breath.

*Thank you for choosing Dr. Shermak as your plastic surgeon. We look forward to continuing to care for you.
Get plenty of rest and best wishes for a speedy recovery!*